

Mexico: President AMLO Meets Vice President Kamala Harris

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Global Research, June 09, 2021

[InfoBrics](#)

Region: [Latin America & Caribbean, USA](#)

Theme: [History](#)

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Since the beginning of the American electoral process, the Mexican government has bet on Joe Biden’s project as an alternative to the migration crisis and as a way to guarantee financial resources for Latin America. However, the US president’s delay in fulfilling his promises has led to growing instability in relations with Mexico. This week, analysts around the world announced the beginning of a “new era” in bilateral relations between Americans and Mexicans with the first official meeting between Kamala Harris and Andrés Manuel López Obrador, where several topics of mutual interest were discussed. However, it seems too early to believe that such a meeting will have a real positive impact on relations between the two countries.

Earlier this week, US Vice President Kamala Harris personally met with Lopez Obrador in Mexico. Harris saw it as an extremely profitable opportunity and ensured a prosperous future in bilateral relations, guaranteeing the beginning of a “new era” in US-Mexico ties. “I strongly believe that we are embarking on a new era that makes clear the interdependence and interconnection between nations,” she [said](#). This optimism was shared by several analysts who published articles in media outlets around the world announcing the success of the meeting and affirming that this is the starting point for a future of cooperation and mutual prosperity.

Despite the apparent success of the meeting, any optimism regarding this topic should be carefully considered. The US and Mexico have always had tense, unstable relations. In general, the interests of any Latin developing nation collide with Washington’s plans in its international projections. With Mexico, it is no different. The Latin country tries to assert itself as a protective state for the developing nations of Central America. As a Latin country in North America and with an economy considerably stronger than most other Latin nations, Mexico plays a role of regional political power and mediator in conflicts between Washington and the Latin world – which obviously does not interest the US.

Currently, one of the most relevant points in the clash of interests between the US and Latin nations is the migration issue. Biden, whose electoral base was the Hispanic population on American soil, promised a comprehensive and efficient migration reform that would legalize the situation of thousands of Latinos in the US. It would be unfair to say that Biden has not

made efforts to legalize immigrants – much progress has been made, but the long-awaited reform has not yet happened and may not occur anytime soon. The current migration rates have already been severely criticized by American society, in addition to having generated a diplomatic crisis with Canada due to the allocation of illegal immigrants on the northern border. The Biden Administration will, of course, maintain moderate efforts to disguise the problem, but it will not take any radical steps to legalize all immigrants. Mexico, as a mediator of interests between Latin States and the North, is impatiently awaiting a definitive response from the Biden Administration regarding the migration issue – and the longer Washington takes to resolve the problem, the more this harms Mexican interests.

It is not by chance that the meeting between Obrador and Harris did not make any progress regarding migration. On the other hand, some extremely important topics were addressed – mostly due to pressure from the Mexican leader. This is the case, for example, with American financial support for Latin nations. Economic instability in Latin America – especially in Central America – is an extremely sensitive topic, as it affects not only the interests of Latin countries but also the American interests, because the more poverty in these countries, the more there will be immigrants in the US. Central American nations pressure Mexico to demand from Biden a financial assistance to the countries of the North Central American Triangle – Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala –, which has been promised for months and remains without any real effect. At the meeting, both leaders signed a memorandum of understanding promising to mutually collaborate for the economic development of southern Mexico and northern Central America. But, in practice, this will depend on the US government's investment priorities.

Another point also discussed at the meeting and of central importance is the issue of combating the pandemic. Washington recently shipped 2.7 million doses of AstraZeneca and promised to ship one million single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccines. The gesture was a great diplomatic “kindness” with the neighboring country, considering that the US still prohibits the export of the vaccine – similar actions were taken with Canada, India and South Korea (all important geopolitical allies of Washington). This indicates that Washington really intends to make Mexico a closer nation with friendlier relations, but the problem is what that would imply for Latin countries. Mexico wants the US to help poor Central American nations fight the pandemic. The US is not interested in operating such assistance, which will also lead to more crises and migration flows, given the social impacts of the pandemic.

As a result, we have a vicious cycle where relations between the US and Mexico are getting better and better on points that concern only these two countries, but they do not advance in the agenda of aid to Central America. At the heart of this problem is the migration issue: the more crisis in Central America, the more immigrants in the US. Washington wants to curb migration but is currently unwilling to invest in mechanisms to avoid migration flows due to other “priorities” of the US government.

It is undeniable that Biden is willing to maintain good relations with Obrador, but for that he will demand that the Mexican president abandon his role as representative of the interests of the Latin nations and mediator in the dialogue between Central America and Washington – which Obrador will not do. The Mexican leader is not willing to give up his role as a mediator, not because he cares a lot about Central America, but because this role is of central importance for Mexican geopolitics: it is Mexico's international projection as a regional political power. Washington wants Mexico close as a subordinate, not an allied

power, so conflicts of interest will continue.

So, the meeting between Harris and Obrador was undoubtedly very important, but it was not a great advance. The topics discussed at the meeting were absolutely superfluous and only served the interests of these both countries, ignoring the most important issues (concerning Central America). Therefore, this may indeed be the beginning of fruitful bilateral relations, but it is far from being a "new era".

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